# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

## Cabinet

**Date of Meeting**: 27th May 2014
**Report of**: Strategic Housing Manager
**Subject/Title**: Vulnerable and Older People's Housing Strategy
**Portfolio Holder**: Councillor Don Stockton, Housing and Jobs; Councillor Janet Clowes, Care and Health in the Community

## 1 Report Summary

1.1 This report seeks the ratification of the appended Vulnerable and Older People's Housing Strategy for Cheshire East Borough Council. This report summarises the nature of the Strategy, its construction, and the findings of the Strategy's consultation process, whilst requesting cabinet approval of the Strategy.

1.2 The Strategy assumes a central role in Cheshire East's strategic forward planning: it is one of the two major change programmes (5.2) designed to deliver on Priority 5 of the Council's Three Year Plan: *Securing housing that is locally-led, community-based, and meets local needs.* This priority is, in turn, a crucial policy in realising Outcome 5 of the Plan: *People Live Well and for Longer.*

1.3 The Strategy has been formed through an extensive and rigorous consultation cycle. Initial consultation and evidence-gathering with Council services, housing partners and providers (including a consultation event) yielded an initial draft of the Strategy. This draft was then subject to a six-week public consultation which garnered further feedback. This has been assimilated in the production of the final version of the Strategy which accompanies this report. A summary of the consultation responses and the changes to the draft Strategy that they incited are found in section 10.6 of this report. The key messages of the Strategy are summarised in its executive summary.

## 2 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that:

2.1.1 The appended Vulnerable and Older People's Housing Strategy and its action plan are ratified and become operative for Cheshire East Council.

**3      Reasons for Recommendations**

**3.1**   The key objectives and benefits that the Strategy will realise are:

**3.1.1**   Mapping the current picture of accommodation supply and demand by client group to baseline a picture of vulnerable persons housing within the Borough.

**3.1.2**   Utilising this information as a basis for developing an optimal model of accommodation and support provision across all vulnerable client groups to inform Cheshire East's commissioning cycle and development priorities.

**3.1.3**   Integrating an effective and appropriate housing into a multi-disciplinary and cross-agency approach for improving well-being for vulnerable people.

**3.1.4**   Providing and inciting an evolving evidence base to inform planning decisions and emergent policies whilst complementing the Local Plan.

**3.1.5**   Realising Outcome 5 of the Council's Three Year Plan: *People Live Well and For Longer*.

**3.1.6**   Realising Priority 5 of the Council's Three Year Plan: *Securing housing that is locally-led, community-based, and meets local needs.* The Vulnerable and Older People's Housing Strategy is one of the two major change programmes to deliver on this priority.

**4      Wards Affected**

**4.1**   All

**5      Local Ward Members**

**5.1**   All

**6      Policy Implications**

**6.1**   The Vulnerable and Older People's Housing Strategy is prioritised within the Council's Three Year Plan framework:

- Outcome 5: *People Live Well and for Longer*
  - Priority 5: *Securing housing that is locally-led, community-based, and meets local needs.*

> § Change Programme 5.2: *Deliver an accommodation strategy for vulnerable adults and those with learning disabilities.*

**6.2** The accommodation of vulnerable people by virtue concerns a host of Council services that collectively work towards improving prospects and well-being for affected client groups. As such, the Strategy champions a holistic and integrated approach, aspiring to catalyse and unite Council services, community partners, and providers in a concerted direction. In its construction extensive liaison has taken place across adults' services, children's services, public health, housing, and planning to ensure that the Strategy reflects the priorities and initiatives of these services. For instance, the Strategy channels the emergent strategic commissioning intentions, has fed into the Lifecourse work surrounding learning disabilities, and reflects the drug and alcohol service recommissioning.

**6.3** Principally, the Strategy corroborates and augments the Council's commitment to enabling independence, reablement, and recovery through the appropriate provision of accommodation and support services. Such an approach is increasingly enshrined throughout the Council's commissioning wings, and the Vulnerable and Older People's Housing Strategy supports this by advocating the provision of accommodation models that foster independence and reablement - such as supported accommodation, sheltered housing, and extra care schemes as an alternative to institutional care.

**6.4** Initial findings suggest that such an approach is required to manage the well-documented demographic pressures caused by longer life expectancy and advances in medical and social care. The Council can expect a rise in the number of vulnerable people in need of specialist accommodation, and an opportunity exists to consider the accommodation landscape within the Borough and engineer it so that more vulnerable people are supported to live fulfilling, independent lives within the community.

**6.5** As such, the Strategy will set the direction of travel and accommodation priorities. These will then inform future service commissioning work and planning policies to realise the determined approach through provider management and future development.

**7    Financial Implications**

**7.1** Full business cases which consider all financing options (both internal and external) and any potential risks to the Council will be developed for any major projects or developments that arise as a result of the Strategy's priorities. These will be prepared and assessed on a project-by-project basis at the appropriate time. Such business cases will follow the established route for

ratification including gateway approvals at the appropriate points in accordance with the Council's project management protocols.

**7.2** The exploratory and on-going actions recommended in the Strategy will be met from within existing resources.

**7.3** Similarly, the Strategic Housing team will continue to lead and dedicate existing resource to the Strategy's finalisation and coordinating the delivery of the action plan.

## 8 Legal Implications

**8.1** The Strategy is the girding by which Cheshire East will provide increasingly appropriate specialist accommodation for vulnerable people that drives superior outcomes. It is the first, agenda-setting stage of the commissioning cycle that will ultimately ensure that vulnerable people are optimally cared for and enabled to live independent and vibrant lives in housing tailored to their needs and supportive of their specific issues.

**8.2** In doing so, the Strategy supports the Council in fulfilling its duties to vulnerable people as delineated under legislation including: the Children Act (1989), the Children Act (2004), Children Leaving Care Act (2000), Mental Health Act (1983), Housing Act (1996), the National Assistance Act (1948), the National Health Service and the Community Care Act (1990), the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offender Act (2012), and the Homelessness Act (2002). These items of legislation underpin the Council's duties and services to vulnerable people, which the Strategy is a key component in delivering.

**8.3** The legal implications of any project or development that arises as a result of the Strategy's direction will be assessed individually as these initiatives progress through the Council's project management gateways.

## 9 Risk Management

**9.1** There are risks that the Council does not possess an appropriate accommodation and service mixture to deliver optimal outcomes for vulnerable people. Many accommodation support services report undersupplies, whilst the supply of supported and specialist accommodation is frequently unable to match demand. Moreover, an overreliance on institutional care within certain client groups is heightening costs for self-funders and social services. There is therefore a need to construct a strategy for vulnerable people's accommodation to fathom the accommodation landscape and optimise the strategic priorities for each vulnerable client group within budgetary possibilities. This will inform the

commissioning and development process to ensure that there is an optimal specification of vulnerable people's accommodation within the Borough.

9.2 There is a risk that different elements of the Authority have different approaches to accommodation and relevant support services, as well as divergent information on the character and needs of vulnerable client groups. As such, the Strategy coordinates and connects the work of Council services and wider partners and providers, ensuring a consistent and strategic approach to vulnerable people's accommodation.

9.3 Vulnerable person's accommodation is complex in nature, involves a large number of agencies, and is a deeply emotive and fundamental issue that has wide implications across individuals, families, and communities. As such, it is vital that affected individuals and agencies have had the opportunity to comment on the direction posited in the Strategy, to ensure that the full range of opinions, experiences, and knowledge are incorporated. By publically consulting on the draft Strategy, the Council has negated the risk of implementing a strategic direction that does not properly reflect the range of needs and views within the Borough.

9.4 In terms of the risks associated with developing and implementing a new strategy, there are a number of associated and inherent risks:

- *Momentum, actions, and delivery:* As with any strategy, there is a risk that strategic direction does not translate into transformative action on the ground. This has been mitigated by the creation of a comprehensive action plan for each client group with service responsibilities, which will be connected to an emergent monitoring framework. Moreover, engagement and support has been assured from the relevant services through involvement in the construction of the Strategy. Finally, cross-service working groups have already been established to explore some of the key themes arising from the Strategy, with a delivery group to coordinate provision and take the action plan forward.

- *Funding for major projects:* The development of new specialist housing is frequently costly and complex, factors that increasingly delimiting in a time of austerity and curtailed public funding. To affect any new developments inspired by the Strategy, there will thus be a need to maximise private finance through partnership and creatively use public funding and Council-held assets to leverage and incite development. It is intended that proposals will be brought forward to utilise Council-held land for specialist housing.

## 10 Background and Options

**10.1** The Strategy surveys a wide range of evidence and research to determine the accommodation needs of vulnerable people, before recommending strategic priorities to address these needs. The Strategy stratifies vulnerable people into the following eight primary groups, though there are many sub-groups and linkages subsumed within and across these:

- Older people
- Learning disabilities
- Mental health issues
- Cared for children/care leavers
- Drug and alcohol issues
- Physical and sensory disabilities
- Domestic abuse
- Homelessness

**10.2** The analysis of available evidence and consultation responses has informed a number of priorities for each client group (detailed in the Strategy with their rationale). These can be summarised in a number of thematic outcomes that cut across all client groups, represented in the Strategy's overarching policy framework.

- Outcome 1: 'People are supported to live in their own homes independently for longer.' This will be achieved by:

  o Continuing to review and improve care and support services to ensure that independent living and reablement is achievable and promoted to as many vulnerable people and older people as possible.

  o Promoting the use of assistive technologies and home adaptations to remove physical barriers and enable independent living.

  o Building capacity within local communities to support vulnerable and older people, maximising autonomy and limiting social isolation.

- Outcome 2: 'People can receive the support they need in a wide range of specialist, supported accommodation within the Borough.' This will be achieved by:

  o Continuing to refine and appropriately expand the menu of specialist and supported housing that caters for vulnerable and older client groups, looking to create synergies across groups where appropriate.

- o Working with partners to develop new housing models for vulnerable and older people, prioritising sheltered and extra care housing as a means of promoting independent living.

- o Promote wherever possible a stepped accommodation model that enables a transition towards independence through phased options mapped to service journeys.

- Outcome 3: 'People are able to make informed choices about the accommodation, care, and support options within the Cheshire East.' This will be achieved by:

  - o Working to achieve comprehensive and consistent intelligence on vulnerable and older groups to best inform service commissioning and decision-making.

  - o Ensuring that accommodation services and advice are accessible, clear, and promote future planning and proactive service engagement.

  - o Utilising the Vulnerable and Older People's Housing Strategy as a flagship strategy to unite and shape the approach to vulnerable person's accommodation Council services and partner organisations.

10.3 This emergent Strategy has built upon Cheshire East's extant work in creating a supported housing strategy, produced by consultants Red Quadrant. However, the Strategy in its current form greatly expands upon the scope of clients, evidence, and detail contained in the previous work. Such expansion was considered necessary to capture the complexities of - and overlap between - client groups, ensuring a more comprehensive and holistic document.

10.4 The Strategy was constructed through extensive cross-service and pan-organisational consultation. This provided a crux of key-findings and priorities that were then expanded, corroborated, and tested through consultation. A consultation event was held in November 2013, attended by Cheshire East councillors, Council officers, housing providers, and support service providers. The results of this workshop combined with the initial analysis of the evidence base combined to form the first draft of the Strategy.

10.5 The Strategy subsequently went out for a six-week public consultation period from March to April 2014, during which local people and organisations were invited to comment on the scope, findings, and priorities of the draft Strategy. This produced some useful feedback which has been incorporated into the final version of the Strategy appended to this report.

10.6 The following are the key changes that were made to the draft Strategy following the public consultation to create the final version:

- The Strategy was deemed to be quite large and complex, and sometimes did not chart a clear rationale through each chapter's sections. In response, the arguments have been made more explicit and better emphasised, and the ordering of the subsections within the chapters has been changed to provide more logical progress and summary. An executive summary has been utilised to capture the key messages for each group.

- The Older Persons chapter was thought to be slightly misleading at times as it did not clearly distinguish between the different levels of need covered in the chapter. Crucially, not all older people are vulnerable and require specialist or supported accommodation. In response, this distinction has been more clearly made in the final Strategy and general needs accommodation for older people given greater weighting. The title of the Strategy has also been revised to 'Vulnerable and Older People's Housing Strategy' to emphasise that not all older people are necessarily vulnerable.

- Access to supported accommodation for people with Mental Health issues emerged as a key concern, with demand rising. In response, additional research has been conducted concerning the accommodation requirements of people with Mental Health issues and the barriers to accommodation identified through work the Community Mental Health teams and the Housing Options and Homelessness team. This has led to more detailed conclusions in that chapter and a bolstered actions plan including the creation of a working protocol between Housing and the Community Mental Health teams.

- The ideal model of specialist accommodation for people with Learning Disabilities emerged as a key discussion point, with accommodation models and terminology queried. In response, the chapter concerning people with Learning Disabilities has been clarified with consistent terminology to emphasise that the priorities and conclusions align with the views on optimal accommodation expressed during consultation.

- More detailed evidence and conclusions have been sought and included surrounding the number of children with learning disabilities, so there is a clearer picture of the cohort who may require supported accommodation in the future.

- More accurate evidence was sought and analysed concerning the number of property adaptations and equipment interventions utilised for people with physical disabilities, in response to observations during the consultation that figures quoted did not fully reflect the extent of these services.

- The chapter concerning Cared for Children and Care Leavers has been expanded to include Children in Need. This has been in response to

consultation feedback that a general chapter on children is a more logical place for information on homeless young people, rather than its previous location under homelessness. Children in Need encompasses those young people who present to services with a housing need, rather than just those that are already known to the Council by virtue of a parental duty.

- Where possible, needs analyses have been taken down to a more local level to give supply and demand for individual towns rather than, for instance, Local Area Partnership (LAP) boundaries. Moreover, spatial boundaries have, where possible, been aligned with those of Cheshire East's Local Plan. This makes future planning more specific and coordinated.

- The Drugs and Alcohol chapter has been revised to align with the progression of the Drug and Alcohol services recommissioning work. This includes augmented evidence and analysis of demand for services and accommodation from different areas.

- Enhanced evidence has been included in the Homelessness chapter to better augment the conclusions drawn, and greater clarification has been given surrounding the types and stages of accommodation required to better cater for this client group.

## 11   Access to Information

Further information and background papers relating to this report can be found by contacting the report writer:

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